

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOGADI 01319 021307Z

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 1319

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, SO

SUBJ: SOMALIA'S NEW FOREIGN MINISTER: A LOSER

1. ON JULY 27, SIAD NAMED HIS HALF-BROTHER ABDURAHMAN JAMA BARRE AS FOREIGN MINISTER, THUS FILLING VACANCY LEFT BY DISMISSAL OF OMAR ARTEH IN EARLY 1976. AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FOREIGN MINISTRY, ABDURAHMAN HAS BEEN ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER DURING INTERIM PERIOD.

2. ABDURAHMAN IS POOR CHOICE FOR FOREIGN MINISTRY POST AND HAS NEITHER MENTAL ENDOWMENTS NOR MANAGEMENT SKILLS. HE IS AS MUDDLED INTELLECTUALLY AS HE IS MENDACIOUS IN CHARACTER. HE HAS USED FOREIGN MINISTRY AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PERSONAL GAIN AND A TOOL FOR PERSONAL RETRIBUTION AGAINST FOREIGN EMBASSIES IN MOGADISCIO WHICH HAVE OFFENDED HIM. MOST HAVE. HE IS DISLIKED BY MANY FOREIGN AMBASSADORS BOTH PAST AND PRESENT. THOSE WITH EGOS AS INFLATED AS ABDURAHMAN'S HAVE OFTEN BYPASSED HIM IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH PRESIDENCY (E.G., ITALIAN AND SOME ARAB AMBASSADORS). THOSE WITH NOT ENOUGH CLOUT TO GET BY WITH IT HAVE BEEN AT THE MERCY OF HIS FOREIGN MINISTRY BUREAUCRACY.

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PAGE 02 MOGADI 01319 021307Z

3. HE IS ALSO DISLIKED BY MANY SOMALIS, INCLUDING HIS OWN FOREIGN MINISTRY STAFF. EX-FONMIN OMAR ARTEH WAS VICTIM OF ABDURAHMAN AND HIS OUSTER COINCIDED WITH POWER-STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO WHEN ARTEH ATTEMPTED REIN-IN ABDURAHMAN'S MANIPULATION OF SOMALIA'S FOREIGN SERVICE POSTINGS AND USE OF GSDR DIPLOMATIC BAGS TO BRING MATERIAL TRIBUTE (SHIRTS, SUITS AND CURRENCY) FROM HIS MINIONS IN SOMALI EMBASSIES

ABROAD.

4. DESPITE HIS KINSHIP AND TRIBAL TIES TO PRESIDENT SIAD, HE APPEARS TO HAVE LITTLE OR NO POLICY ROLE. ALTHOUGH HE SITS IN QUITE OFTEN ON SIAD'S TALKS WITH FOREIGN AMBASSADORS, HE SELDOM IS CALLED UPON TO CONTRIBUTE. WITHOUT IDEAS OR ORIGINALITY HIMSELF, HE PARROTS THE OFFICIAL LINE AND IN SO DOING OCCASIONALLY MANAGES TO MAKE EVEN THE COMMONPLACE SOUND LIKE SCHOOL BOY GIBBERISH. LIKE MOST MEN OF LIMITED MENTAL OR IMAGINATIVE GIFTS, HIS CREDULITY IS BOUNDLESS (IN 1974 HE ASKED AN AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WHY THE US GAVE FOREIGN AID TO THE UK BUT NOT SOMALIA, DESPITE FACT THAT SHIPS OF BOTH COUNTRIES TRADED WITH NORTH VIETNAM).

5. ABDURAHMAN IS VAIN, INTENSELY NATIONALISTIC AND SUSPICIOUS OF FOREIGNERS, ALTHOUGH HE HAS SOME CLOSE ITALIAN FRIENDS. HE IS NO GREAT ADMIRER OF US. EASILY OFFENDED, HE CAN BE POISONOUS WHEN AROUSED. ON OCCASION, HE CAN BE CONGENIAL SOCIAL COMPANION WHEN THE CONVERSATION MAKES NO DEMANDS OF HIS INTELLECT. POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS OF ANY DEPTH SWAMP HIS BOAT AND HE REACTS BY ASSAULTING THE HELMSMAN WITH HIS PADDLE.

6. SIAD WILL PROBABLY NOT RPT NOT RELY ON ABDURAHMAN BARRE TO CARRY OUT HIS FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS OF ANY SENSITIVITY BUT WILL CONTINUE TO SHUTTLE HIS OLD
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PAGE 03 MOGADI 01319 021307Z

CRONIES ABROAD TO MEET THE POLITICAL NEEDS OF THE MOMENT, SENDING ARAB-SYMPATHIZING COLLEAGUES TO MOSLEM CAPITALS, THE BOURGEOIS-MINDED TO WESTERN CAPITALS AND SOMALI MIL OFFICERS TO THE BLOC. THIS HAS BEEN SIAD'S STYPE FOR SOME TIME -- SUITING THE MAN TO THE OCCASION -- AND PERHAPS ONE REASON HE FELT HE COULD NAME HIS TRIBESMAN TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY POST. ABDURAHMAN'S RESPONSIBIOITIES WILL BE MORE DOMESTIC THAN FOREIGN. ABDURAHMAN'S VANITY AND INFATUATION WITH CEREMONY MAY MAKE THIS DIFFICULT, HOWEVER, BUT THERE MAY BE OCCASIONS WHEN HE MAY BE CALLED UPON TO PERFORM SYMBOLIC TASKS ABROAD IN HIS NEW ROLE WITHOUT PREJUDICING SOMALIA'S CAUSE.

7. ABDURAHMAN WAS BORN IN 1937, EDUCATED IN ITALY AND JOINED THE FOREIGN MINISTRY IN 1969, WHEN HE WAS NAMED DIRECTOR GENERAL. HE HAS BEEN ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER FOR SOME TIME. SIAD'S SLUGGISHNESS IN NAMING HIS FOREIGN MINISTER MAY MEASURE SIAD'S OWN ESTIMATE OF THE MEAGRENESS OF HIS FIGTS. ABDURAHMAN SPEAKS FLUENT ITALIAN. HIS ENGLISH IS POOR.
LOUGHRAN

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